



Parnassus

An Appreciation of the WILLIAM COTTON murals at the Capitol Theater by ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

The great mural paintings by William Cotton in the Capitol Theater stand to-day unrivaled. There are in America no decorations to compare with them; none better in any public building. A new painter of mural pictures makes his debut among us, and, without question, takes his place beside Abbey, Alexander and Blum, the three great mural painters of America. What Abbey did for the Boston Public Library; what John Alexander did for Pittsburgh, William Cotton has done for New York, and, like his predecessors, he offers to the public in these decorations a liberal education in color, composition and design.



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The work of William Cotton in the Capitol Theater is purely decorative—as it should be—part of the entire architectural scheme, and belonging to the ensemble as fundamentally as the hidden masonry and iron construction.

Through all the charm of delicious color and bewilderingly beautiful composition runs an almost hidden note of delicate irony, the ghost of a smile, half tender, half amused; as when we tell our children those fairy tales, which shall be told and retold as long as there are children and as long as there is a bedtime moon to flood the world with magic.

The panel called "Parnassus" is a masterpiece of luminous color. Here is the surface of the peak toward which, in some measure, all hearts are addressed. And it does not appear to be the chilly, lonely, naked solitude that the world supposes. For there is the Listener there—that lonely phantom biding in all

hearts, to whom our best is offered—and to whom, we hope, one day we may offer our best in the living world—this One Woman who is to listen, understand and reward what we do in creative work on earth!

In the panel called "Song" nothing can compare with the rich wine-glow that flushes the picture. It is a rare and exquisite inspiration—the central figure of youth incarnate, dreamy vague eyed, possessed of that deathless vision, which is youth's twin and other soul—listening to the song of youth, and to the vague accompaniment of her own heart. Wonderful is the other figure at her elbow, more mature, more ripely beautiful, mistress perhaps of mysteries unsolved for the girl beside her. And over all the sun-touched glow of grape foliage and purple grapes.

The Tribune will reproduce next Sunday two more of the Cotton murals—"Chivalry" and "Youth."

Song